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THE STORY OF JOHN BEICONGER
THE FIRST AMERICAN ANCESTOR OF ALL THE CONGERS

By

Franklin Barker Conger

Washington, D. C.

The history of my four American ancestral families, the Conger-West and Barker-Bodley tribes, has been prepared as a token of love for my children, and my only surviving sister, Florence West Conger.

PREFACE

A distinguished writer says:

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Read the preface. A command that may be regarded as too imperative, and yet one that the author has some right to make, in consideration of the deep interest which he may be supposed to have in its observance. Having prepared the entertainment, as he is about to open the door to his guests, it is quite natural that he should wish to pass them in with his own introduction.

When, in 1930, the anniversary ceremonies commemorating the arrival of the ship Arabella at Salem harbor, June 30, 1930, having on board the founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, were taking place in New England, I was inspired to undertake the task of preparing the history of my Barker-Bodley and West tribes, the history of my own branch of the Conger family being already in print.

Commencing the work with hardly any knowledge of my Barker-Bodley and West ancestors, and without the slightest genealogical experience, I now have a feeling of pride in having secured from records of the dead past, data never before known to any living member of my several branches of near relatives, especially, evidence that the Congers, Barkers and Wests, were among the very earliest settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. There was a Bodley there also, but direct connection with my mother's Bodley family has not been established.

Everything connected with the migrations of the first known Congers, Barkers and Bodleys in America, has Ipswich, Essex County, Massachusetts as a starting point. Even before 1640, it became overcrowded. Rowley, about three miles distant, and Olde Newbury, about six, were soon settled, each being reached by water from Ipswich. In Rowley, the three brothers Barker, James, Thomas and Richard, were first known about 1639. At the same time Thomas Bodley came. He married a Barker sister. In Olde Newbury, settled in 1635, John Kelly of Newbury, England, was one of its founders. John Belconger, in 1666, married his only daughter. About fifteen miles west of Ipswich, Richard Barker, and a few others, founded the town of Andover, about 1643. Many nearby places bear the imprint of Barker influence. In 1927, Miss Elizabeth Frye Barker, of #15, West 107th Street, New York City, published a book of over 500 pages, giving a complete genealogical record of the five first known Barker families which came early to America. Three with the Plymouth Colony, one settled in Delaware, and the fifth, the three brothers Barker, with the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The records of these families is complete down to date of publication in most instances. Any one interested

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in Barker genealogical history, should be possessed of a copy of this wonderful work. The record of my great grandfather Barker ends with the date of his birth. However, a very complete record of this Barker, is found in the application of a descendant, Edgar Earl Barker, of Salt Lake City, Utah, who in ^{some of} making application for membership in the Society of the American Revolution, gives a complete and most carefully prepared statement of his great great grandfather's record, and all of his children, together with a large blue print, showing his own, and the Parker collateral branch of the family.

The Conger history above referred to, relates exclusively to the descendants of Job Conger 2nd, a grandson of the original American head of the family. This history was prepared by my double cousin, Charles Greenwood Barker Conger, late of Washington, D. C., and published in 1903, by Shea Smith, of Chicago, Illinois, a Conger descendant. A copy of this work of 165 pages, is in the Library of Congress. After its publication, my cousin continued his research, in order to cover early descendants of the first Conger in America, which work continued until the sudden death of my cousin in 1906, at Washington, D. C. However, shortly after, a kinsman, Mr. Charles L. Conger, of McIntosh, Minnesota, took up the task, and during the present year has donated ten typewritten volumes of Conger genealogies, to the Library of Congress, receiving letters of commendation from Library officials. These volumes were accorded the very high honor of being assigned to the "Rare Book Section". In them can be found some reference to every known Conger on the American Continent, except those mentioned in my cousin's history. Before becoming aware of the work of Mr. Charles L. Conger, I had accumulated voluminous data regarding the Conger descendants, but not sufficient for my needs. Mr. Conger's very complete story furnishes me with many missing links, and I shall make use of it by frequent quotations.

The recital of the genealogical features of my story will be issued in parts, in the near future. I would greatly appreciate receiving soon, from those interested, information covering births, marriages and deaths, of those of my generation and later, for incorporation in my story.

FRANKLIN BARKER CONGER
1932

3220 Connecticut Ave.
Washington, D. C.

THE STORY OF JOHN BELCONGER
THE FIRST AMERICAN ANCESTOR OF ALL THE CONGERS

BY

FRANKLIN BARKER CONGER
WASHINGTON, D. C.
1932

To Mr. Orra Eugene Monnette, the celebrated historian, of Los Angeles, California, must be given sole credit for bringing to light indisputable evidence that has long been sought. In his historical "Woodbridge and Piscataway", (a contemplated work of eight volumes, three of which are now in the Congressional Library,) it is shown that by photograph and photostat process, there have been reproduced from faded, worn and torn records of early New Jersey, clear, decipherable copies which reveal names heretofore hidden from modern historians and genealogists. In these wonderful books the name of John Belconger frequently appears, often coupled in brackets after the name John Conger. Up to the present time nothing has been known of John Conger, except as shown in the "Conger Family History", a book of 165 pages, prepared after over fifteen years work, by my double cousin, Charles Greenwood Barker Conger, of Washington, D. C., and issued in 1903. In it he states,

"John Conger, primus, was probably a soldier of the Commonwealth Army, and came to Woodbridge, N. J., in 1667, with his wife Mary and one son, Enos".

John Belconger is first mentioned, so far as known, as of Olde Newbury, Massachusetts Bay Colony. In the Vital Statistics of that town, it is stated that on January 12th, 1666, he married Sarah Kelly. "Pope's Pioneers of Massachusetts Bay Colony", records the marriage of Mary Kelly to John Belconger, April 12th, 1666", a difference of three months, without any difference in day of month. "Coffin," the well known historian of Olde Newbury, Massachusetts Bay Colony, states that John Belconger, married Mary or Sarah Kelly. This double named Kelly maiden was the only daughter of John Kelly, who came to Olde Newbury, Massachusetts, from Newbury, England, with the original founders of the Massachusetts town. He was one of the original Proprietors in 1642. "Coffin" gives a whole page to him, saying among other things, "Tradition states that the father of John Kelly, the first to come to Newbury in 1635, emigrated from Ireland to Olde Newbury, England, became attached to a lady of rank, and having on one occasion by his courage, successfully defended her father's house, when attacked by robbers, he obtained his consent to a marriage with his daughter". Sarah or Mary Kelly, the only daughter of John Kelly, was born in Olde Newbury, Massachusetts, February 12th, 1641. The only other child of John Kelly, a son John Jr., was born in the same town, July 2nd, 1642. He married, May 25th, 1683, Sarah, daughter of Deacon Richard Knight, who

During the same year that John Belconger married Sarah or Mary Kelly, in Olde Newbury, Mass., (1666), Daniel Pierce, a prominent citizen of that place, and well known throughout the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was engaged in organizing a group of citizens to move to the newly acquired Province of New Jersey, which King Charles II., wrested from the Dutch a couple of years before (1664). In 1667, Daniel Pierce, his nine associate owners, and forty-six other men, many with their families, arrived in New Jersey and founded the Township of Woodbridge, located on the estuary that flows between Staten Island and the Main, and between the Raritan and Rahway rivers.

In the list of the forty-six men is found the name of John Conger. As all of the forty-six men are believed to have come from Olde Newbury, Mass., it seems reasonable to assume that John Conger lived there, but under a slightly different name, that of John Belconger.

In the "Conger Family History", my cousin gives the names of the children of John and Mary Conger, arranged by him, according to the date of birth, or death, as follows,

Enos, born,----Died, Nov. 21, 1689; Sarah, born, January,----1668; Joanah, born, August,----1670; John, born, May 24, 1674; Elizabeth, born, January 1, 1678; Lediah, born, January 1, 1679; Jonathan, born, March 29, 1683; Gershom, born,----1685; Joseph, born, May 17, 1692; Job, born, June 9, 1694; Rachael, born, May 12, 1696; Lydia, born, April 28, 1698.

With the exception of Gershom, these names and dates are found in "Dally's Woodbridge and Vicinity", published in 1873, by Rev. John W. Dally, nearly two hundred years after Daniel Pierce and his colonists arrived in New Jersey. The actual verbatim "Dally" list is as follows:

Page 321---Sarah, dau. Mary, born, January,---1668; Joanah, dau. Mary, born, August,---1670; John, son Mary, born, May 24, 1674; Elizabeth, dau. Mary, born, January 1, 1678; Lediah, dau. Mary, born, January 1, 1679; Jonathan, son of Mary, born, March, 29, 1683.

Page 322---Enos, born,----Died, Nov. 21, 1689; Lydia, dau. Sarah, born, April 28, 1698.

Page 323---Joseph, son Sarah, born, May 17, 1692; Job, son Sarah, born, June 9, 1694; Rachael, dau. Sarah, born, May 12, 1696.

Three of these children, Joseph, Job and Rachael, were born before Lydia, (Joseph, six years, Job, four years and Rachael, two years,) yet their names are entered on a page following that of Lydia, and there are many names of other people between that of Lydia and Joseph.

That there was another child not mentioned in "Dally", who was born to John Conger, primus, and his wife Mary or Sarah, is shown in the will that John Conger executed January 14th, 1711, in which he directs the sons named in the will to provide for his son Benjamin out of his estate, when Benjamin becomes of age. Placing Benjamin next after Lydia, born 1698, as being born about 1700, would indicate that he was probably eleven years old at the time the will was made.

Regarding Gershom, there is no mention in "Dally", of his birth or marriage, but there is in that work, sufficient evidence to justify the placing, by my cousin, of his birth as about 1685. On page 326 is found mention of the marriage of Dr. Peter DeSigny, of Woodbridge, to Ann, widow of Robert Rogers, August 20, 1685. Their first child, Ann, was born August 26, 1686. It is to this Ann DeSigny, that Gershom is supposed to have been married, and on March 15, 1707, there was born to Gershom Conger and his wife Ann, a son named David. On September 22, 1708, another child, named Phoebe, was born to this couple, and April 5, 1711, they had another child, which was named Gershom, 2nd. This child Gershom, is the Gershom that has caused much confusion and uncertainty in minds of searchers of Conger descendants, partially on account of the provision in a codicil to the will of John Conger, primus, executed June 14, 1711, six months after the will itself was executed, in which codicil John Conger declares,

"Being very sick and not expecting to live many hours in this life, and my son Gershom being borne since the making of this my last will above written, doe declare that my will and desire is that my three sons Joseph, Job and Benjamin, as they come of age give unto my son Gershom ten shilling each of them, and seaven pounds out of my estate be put out for his use when he Comes of age".

As Gershom, the third child of Gershom, Sr., and Ann, his wife was born on April 5th, 1711, three months before the codicil was executed, John Conger, "being very sick and not expecting to live many hours" may have had hallucinations and imagined that his grandson Gershom was his son Gershom, or the person to whom the codicil was dictated may have blundered and put the word son instead of grandson in the codicil. As John Conger, primus, lived for more than a year after executing the codicil, and there was no further change in the will at the time it was filed, he was unaware of the error, if there was one.

Both Gershom, Sr., and Enos were born in Newark, New Jersey, in my opinion, based on recent discovery that John Conger, primus, at one time lived there.

On page 119, of one of "Monnette's" wonderful books, is found a list of the 84 original settlers of Newark, followed by the statement, "To the foregoing group of first settlers were soon added other settlers". In this additional list is found the following; "John Conger, an original settler of Woodbridge". Another indication that John Conger, primus, lived in Newark, is found in a discourse delivered by a well known historian, as follows,

"One Conger was arrested for charging an illegal rate of interest on money loaned and released when he explained that he did not know that he was doing anything wrong, and would discontinue the practice".

No Conger, except John Conger, primus, would be old enough to engage in business, if the episode occurred in the very early days of Newark.

Between 1683 and 1692, an interval of nine years, there is no mention in Woodbridge records of Conger births. Consequently, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that both Gershom and Enos were born in Newark. If Enos was born there, it would show that he died in infancy. It is also quite probable that Lediah died in infancy or childhood, as Lydia was named after her, which would be following the usual custom of naming a child of the same sex for one dying not long before.

When the Dutch re-captured New York in 1673, they required all persons residing in New Jersey to take the oath of allegiance to Holland, which most everybody willingly agreed to do, they probably being gratified at being relieved of the tyrannical and despotic sway of Carteret, the English Governor of New Jersey. The names of members of a family were required to be given, even unto the third generation. In "Monnette" is found the Woodbridge list, in which appears the names Sarah and Mary Conger, 1668. No more, no less.

From the foregoing presentation of facts and reasonable assumptions, I feel justified in making a revised list of the children of John Conger, primus, and his wife Sarah or Mary, as follows,

- (A) Mary, born in Olde Newbury, Mass., Dec. 29, 1666;
 - (B) Sarah, born in Woodbridge, N. J., January --- 1668;
 - (C) Joanah, born in Woodbridge, August --- 1670; (D) John, born in Woodbridge, May 24, 1674; (E) Elizabeth, born in Woodbridge, January 1, 1678; (F) Lediah, born in Woodbridge, January 1, 1679; (G) Jonathan, born in Woodbridge, March 29, 1683; (H) Gershom, born in Newark, ---- 1685; Enos, born, in Newark, died in Woodbridge, November 21, 1689;
 - (I) Joseph, born in Woodbridge, May 17, 1692; (K) Job, born in Woodbridge, June 9, 1694; (l) Rachael, born in Woodbridge, May 12, 1696; (M) Lydia, born in Woodbridge, April 28, 1698; (N) Benjamin, born in Woodbridge, --- 1700.
- In "Monnette" I find, "Abigail, born 1690". I am leaving this name out of above list, as it would break the key letter system used by my cousin in his "Conger Family History"; if put in proper place.

The first recorded marriage of children of John Conger, prior to his death in 1712, was that of Joanah, sometimes known as Hannah, who on Jan. 16th, 1687-8 married Joseph Fitz Randolph, of Piscataway, the adjoining township to Woodbridge on the West. Piscataway records state that Joseph Fitz Randolph of Piscataway, married on January 16, 1687-8, Hannah Conger, of Woodbridge. They had children as follows, Hannah, born Feb. 1689; Joseph, Feb. 1690; Mary,

Aug. 1693; Bethia, Sep. 1695; Lydia, Jan. 1697-8; Moses, April 1700; Jonathan, June 1702; Susanna, June 1704; Ruth, June 1706; Ann, --- 1708; Prudence, Nov. 1712; Isaac, April 1716. Bethia married Robert Clarkson, son of John Clarkson. They had eight children. Joseph Fitz Randolph was the fifth of nine children of the American founder of the family, Edward Fitz Randolph of Yorkshire, England. He married Elizabeth Flossom of Barnstable, Mass. They settled in Piscataway township in 1668. The husband died soon afterwards. In 1685, the widow married Captain John Pike, who was one of Daniel Pierce's associates in the founding of Woodbridge Township. The Fitz Randolph family was one of the most noted and distinguished in New Jersey. Being descended from a grand nephew of William the Conqueror, of England, royal blood flowed in their veins.

Another daughter of John Conger, primus, Sarah, is said by Mr. Charles L. Conger, of McIntosh, Minn., to have been married to Edward Wilkenson. They had children, Edward, John and Allen. John Conger, primus, made provision for these grandchildren by deeding to them on March 4, 1702-3 "the patented tracts of upland and meadow (except what is already disposed of) which formerly belonged to Jonathan Haynes of Woodbridge".

Of the other daughters of John Conger, primus, no further record than date of birth has been found.

Of the sons, John, Jonathan, Gershom and Job, each had numerous descendants, whose records are in large part available. Of descendants, Joseph and Benjamin, little is known.

Much of the history of the descendants of the above mentioned four Congers, was published by my cousin in "Collamer's Historical Bulletin" of Washington, D. C. In "Fernald's Genealogical Exchange" of Buffalo, N. Y., Mr. Charles L. Conger, of McIntosh, Minnesota, published a very full account of his ancestors, descended from Moses, who was a brother of my direct ancestor, Job, 2nd, and son of Job, Sr., who was son of John Conger, primus.

New Jersey records show that the patent for 170 acres of land bought and paid for by John Conger, primus, as soon as land was allotted to him, was not issued until 1670. This tract was ten times as long as it was wide and had its Northern boundary on the Rahway River, at that time a navigable stream to any vessels then in use, and it was about three miles from the village of Woodbridge, which was located in the center of Woodbridge township, which was a little more than six miles long North and South, and about six miles wide East and West. As this region was immediately adjacent to what was later known as Rahway Village, it became known as Rahway Neck, and Job Conger who occupied the homestead after the death of his father was known as "Job of Rahway".

At a town meeting action was taken for protecting timber in the township lands, and ten commissioners were appointed. For the Rahway Neck section John Conger and Noah Bishop were selected. These two commissioners, by mistake seized timber rightfully

possessed by others. Suit for damages was successfully brought against them, and the town officials were obliged to meet the costs.

In "Dally" the following is found: "Then at a town meeting in 1694, a vote was taken authorizing the employment of a school teacher from nearby Amboy at a compensation of twenty-four pounds a year, John Conger protested against the proposition, and demanded that the minutes of the meeting should record his protest.

John Conger, primus, was also a party to real estate transactions, buying, trading and selling, in nearly a dozen instances!

He was elected Constable for one or two terms.

"The will of John Conger, primus, dated Jan. 11, 1711, and proved or probated October 7, 1712, disposes of his farm or plantation in Woodbridge..."the easterne division whereof I will and bequeath to my son, Benjamin Conger, to be by him quietly and peaceably possessed as soon as he shall arrive at the age of 21 years and if my son Joseph please he shall have liberty to live upon it ten years after my decease paying the charge arising thereon...The use and improvement of the Westernne division of my said farm or plantation and my dwelling house standing thereon I give to my wife during her state of widowhood and when her condition shall change either by marriage or death I will and bequeath the said Westernne division of my farme together with my now dwelling house and all other buildings standing thereof to my son Job Conger...I will and bequeath to my son Joseph all my freehold right in the towne of "Woodbridge." (Also his rights to "Woodbridge common lands yet to be divided.) "I give to my son my Carts and Ploughs with all the tseling belonging to them to my son Joseph...I give to my son John ten shilling, to my son Jonathan five shilling; to my son Gershom five shilling and to each of my daughters five shilling to be paid by my son Job if demanded. Lastly I give all my cattle, horses, sheep and household stuff to my faithful wife Sarah Conger, whom I do nominate and appoint my sole Executrix to see that this my last will be punctually fulfilled and I doe declare this to be my last will and Testament, hereby Revoking, Renouncing and making void all other wills by me formerly made."

My cousin probably placed Enos as having come to Woodbridge with his parents, because he could find no reference to him in Woodbridge records, other than the announcement of his death in 1689, which was entered after the birth dates of several Conger children were recorded. It would seem reasonable for my cousin to assume therefore, that Enos was born before his parents arrived in Woodbridge, but the positive identification of Mary being the first born child would negative this assumption.

The first church in Woodbridge was organized in 1669, a couple of years after the town was settled. A meeting house 15 by 30 feet was provided for. A larger building started in 1674, was without a floor for about six years, and the community was without a regular preacher until 1707, when the Rev. Nathaniel Wade was installed as Pastor. Among the early members enrolled was Sarah Conger, in December 1708, and John and Mary Conger, May 24, 1709. This John Conger was probably the son of John Conger, primus, and the two women, might have been his wife and daughter. I make this suggestion because the elder Conger and his wife undoubtedly had joined Rev. Parker's battling organization, before leaving Olde Newbury, in which town the Rev. John Woodbridge also officiated, before he returned to England, and after he again lived in America.

In "Historic Roadsides of New Jersey", published by the "Society of Colonial Wars of New Jersey", among references to Woodbridge, on pages 67-68, there appears the statement that "Woodbridge township was named in honor of the Rev. John Woodbridge, who, with a number of associates and their families came from Newbury, Mass., in 1665, and settled in Woodbridge at the solicitation of Capt. Philip Carteret, Governor of the Province of New Jersey."

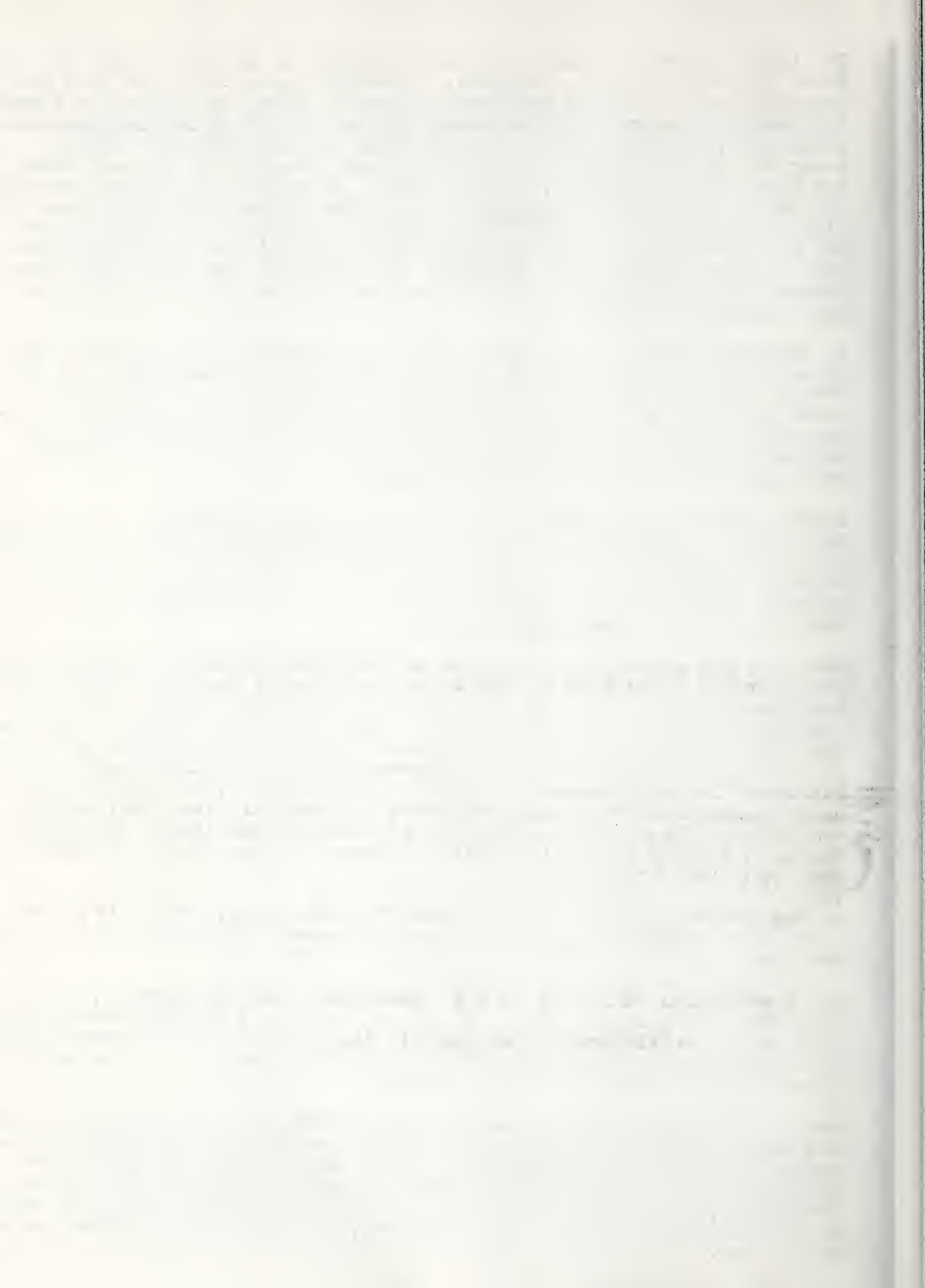
I have never found evidence that the Rev. John Woodbridge was ever in New Jersey. Woodbridge was not settled in 1665, but late in the year 1667, when Daniel Pierce, his nine associate founders, and forty-six other men arrived in New Jersey from Olde Newbury, Massachusetts Bay Colony. The name John Conger appears among the forty-six names, but that of Woodbridge does not.

The scarcity of authentic records of both Olde Newbury, Massachusetts Bay Colony, and Woodbridge township, New Jersey, which has been such a tremendous handicap to all researchers, is clearly shown by the many prominent writers of the history of these two places. Among them, Mr. John J. Currier, says of Olde Newbury, "How many houses were erected or how many families settled in Newbury during the first years of its existence it is impossible to state with exactness, as early records of the town have been sadly neglected and abused. The first volume now contains less than one half of the entries originally inscribed there, and pages on which important events were carefully inscribed have been lost or stolen."

Of Woodbridge records, the Rev. John W. Dally says, "That they were in a deplorable condition, with numbers of pages missing and many so worn and torn that their contents could not be made out."

Mr. Orra Eugene Monnette, in his "Woodbridge and Piscataway", says, on page 222, "Undoubtedly many births, marriages and deaths needed to complete each genealogical story are missing, never to be recovered again, but, fortunately, deed, land, will and administrative records supply these missing facts to a large extent."

When, we Congers, of the present day, acclaim the achievements of these and other eminent historians, in bringing a semblance of order out of chaos, we should not overlook the great indebtedness we owe to the untiring labors of my cousin Charles Greenwood Barker Conger, late of Washington, D. C., Mr. Charles E. Conger, of McIntosh, Minn., as well as to all members of the "Conger Union", for all that they have passed down to us.



ANNOUNCEMENT

For nearly two years past considerable time has been given by me, an octogenarian, to ascertain for the benefit of my children more of the history of my Conger--West and Barker--Bodley families, with the exception of those descendants of Job Conger, 2nd, found in the "Conger Family History", a book of 165 pages, issued in 1903, and wholly compiled by my double cousin, Charles Greenwood Barker Conger, late of Washington, D. C. Until the commencement of this work I had but scant knowledge of any other line of Congers. Now I have a fairly satisfactory record of John, Jonathan, Gershom and Job, Sr., sons of the original American John Conger, (Belconger) who lived at Woodbridge, N. J.

Of the West family, I have a fairly complete record back to my great grandfather, who lived at Granville, New York, but I feel confident of being able to trace the family back to the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

My only knowledge of my Barker ancestors was, that my great grandfather, Jonathan Barker, was wounded at the battle of Fort Erie, Upper Canada, during the War of 1812-14, and died ten days later. To Mr. Edgar Earl Barker, of Salt Lake City, Utah, must be given the sole credit for furnishing complete data, going back in an unbroken line to my first Barker ancestors in America, who were with the early settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This data, together with an extensive blue print, was filed with the "Sons of the American Revolution" when he made application for membership two or three years ago.

Of the Bodley family, I have no record beyond my great grandfather Thomas Bodley, who lived in Cayuga County, New York.

I am desirous of receiving from my immediate Conger relatives, information which will enable me to bring to date, the record of births, marriages and deaths, since the publication of the "Conger Family History" in 1903.

Should a sufficient number of descendants be interested enough to be willing to assist in the cost of printing and distribution of data relating to any particular branch of these families, outside of my own immediate Conger family, suggestions would be acceptable.

FRANKLIN BARKER CONGER
WASHINGTON, D.C.

PART TWO.

THE STORY OF JOHN BELCONGER
THE FIRST AMERICAN ANCESTOR OF ALL THE CONGERS
LATER KNOWN AS JOHN CONGER

BY

FRANKLIN BARKER CONGER
WASHINGTON, D. C.
1932

In the preface of the history of the descendants of Job Conger 2nd, grandson of John Conger, primus, compiled by my double cousin Charles Greenwood Barker Conger, late of Washington, D. C., and published in 1903, by Shea Smith, of Chicago, Illinois, a Conger descendant, my cousin states,

"The following record, while not as complete as could be wished, is, it is believed, as accurate as patience and painstaking can make it, so far as it goes. * * * It is a tradition of the Conger family, which for good reasons seems worthy of belief, that the family came from Alsace, (then a French Province) to Holland about the date of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, (1572), the name being Koniger, and the family of German origin. From Holland the Konigers went to England, and the name was Anglicized into Conger. It is said that there were numerous Congers in Lincolnshire and in the neighborhood of Bristol. John Conger, primus, was probably one of the soldiers of the Commonwealth Army, and came to Woodbridge, N. J., in 1667, with his wife Mary and one son, Enos. He was not one of the original proprietors who founded Woodbridge, but one of the first settlers and participated in the first distribution of lands, his patent of 170 acres bearing date of March 18th, 1669. He held various offices of trust in the township, became a member of the first (Presbyterian) church, and died about September, 1712. His sixth son and tenth child Job, born June 9th, 1694, died --- married Mary Percy, and was the father of Job Conger 2nd.

After the publication of the history of the descendants of Job Conger 2nd, my cousin continued to prepare the history of all other descendants of John Conger, primus, asking the aid of those that might be willing to assist, by joining the "Conger Union", organized by him. He made arrangements with the publisher of "Collamers Historical Bulletin", a monthly magazine published in Washington, D. C., for the use of one whole page of each issue, by which all members of the Union could keep posted. At the end of about four years, the sudden death

of my cousin, in August 1906, caused a cessation of the work. It was, however, taken up soon after, by Charles L. Conger, a kinsman, and a member of the Conger Union. He lived in McIntosh, Minnesota, and was a lineal descendant of Enoch Conger, brother of Job Conger 2nd. Mr. Charles L. Conger made arrangements with the publisher of "Fernalds Genealogical Exchange", a monthly magazine published in Buffalo, N. Y., which were similar to those had with "Collamer's Commercial Bulletin". Consequently, the Conger story was continued monthly for four or five years, until the demise of the magazine. Mr. Conger, however, has kept up his work to the present time, with the result that during the present year he has donated to the Library of Congress, ten typewritten volumes of Conger genealogical matter, where they were honored by being assigned to the "Rare Book Section" and letters of appreciation were sent to Mr. Conger by Library officials. In his work, Mr. Conger makes some mention of every known Conger on the American Continent, except the descendants of Job Conger 2nd, which are found in my cousin's history.

During the existence of the Conger Union, it engaged English genealogists to search for Conger records in England, but their findings were of little avail. Perhaps one reason for their failure was that the persons for whom they searched were called by a different name, as is shown in part one of my story of John Belconger, where, in the opening paragraph is found the following:

"To Mr. Orra Eugene Monnette, the celebrated historian, of Los Angeles, California, must be given the sole credit for bringing to light indisputable evidence that has long been sought. In his historical "Piscataway and Woodbridge" (a contemplated work of eight volumes, three of which are now in the Library of Congress), it is shown that, by photograph and photostat process, there have been reproduced from faded, worn and torn records of early New Jersey, clear decipherable copies which reveal names heretofore hidden from modern historians and genealogists. In these wonderful books the name of JOHN BELCONGER frequently appears, often coupled in brackets after the name of John Conger."

The only previous reference to John Belconger being a member of the Conger tribe that I until very recently have known of, is that made by Charles L. Conger, a kinsman, who, in acknowledging receipt of my Belconger story, declares, under date of March 1st, 1932, as follows:

"Your story of John Belconger came to hand yesterday and I was much pleased to receive it, together with the indisputable proof as to John Belconger and John Conger being identical. However, I have known of John Belconger and his marriage to Sarah or Mary Kelly in Newbury, for nearly nineteen years. In November, 1913, I received a letter from a correspondent in Newark, N. J., which read as follows,



"I note in tonight's Evening News, a suggestion which is new to me and which seems very much to the point. On the chance that you have not known of it, I send it to you."

C.D.A. (whoever that was) in the Newark News Genealogical Department of November 8th, #4506, states that "Coffins" Newbury records the marriage of John Belconger to Mary or Sarah Kelly on April 12th, 1666. The correspondent asks if anything more is known about Belconger, and if he is not identified with John Conger." Mr. Conger continues, "After years of study of the matter and the fact that the first settlers of Woodbridge came from Newbury, Massachusetts, I made the leap of assuming that Belconger and Conger were identical and have so explained and assumed in my records."

In the very early days of my research, I also had become aware of John Belconger being recorded in Newbury, Massachusetts, Vital Statistics, and also in "Coffin's" history of Newbury, and in my notes made an entry of the possibility of some connection with John Conger, primus, who I knew came to New Jersey from Newbury, but on account of the very positive declaration in the preface of my cousin's book of the Conger tribe, as to the origin of the Congers being in Alsace, I did not seriously consider the possibility of a dual identity. Mr. Monnette, however, made it possible for me to be absolutely the very first, not to assume, but to positively declare, that the Newbury, Massachusetts Belconger and the Woodbridge, New Jersey Conger, were one and the same person. Nothing has ever been found as to the antecedents of John Belconger.

Historians say that John Kelly, the father of Sarah or Mary Kelly, came to Newbury, Massachusetts, with the founders in 1635. That he was in some ways prominent in the community, one being that he defied the town authorities by building a house to live in, beyond the bounds prescribed as a safety zone against Indian attack, at which place he established a ferry which was maintained for many years, probably by his only son, John, and his descendants.

An unauthorized story about John Kelly is that he was the son of a Kelly who came to Newbury, Wiltshire, England, from Ireland. Obtaining a position in the home of a landed gentleman, Kelly, when the home was attacked by a band of robbers, at the risk of his life, frustrated their efforts. In appreciation of his faithfulness and bravery, the owner permitted Kelly to marry his daughter, a lady of title. John Kelly, the American, died in 1644, a short time after the birth of his youngest child, John. The vital statistics of Newbury, Massachusetts, record the birth and marriage of several of the children of this son John, but whether any of them went to Woodbridge, New Jersey, is not known, although there were several Kelly's among the early settlers of that place.

It would seem reasonable to assume that the widow of John Kelly, Senior, reared his two children, the daughter, ~~Sarah~~ or Mary, and the son John, each under four years of age at time of his death.

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Before continuing the genealogical features of part one of the Conger family history, it seems advisable to give a synopsis of published occurrences preceding the English conquest of East Jersey, the historical home of the American Congers.

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"It was in September 1609, that Henry Hudson, an English mariner in the service of the Dutch East India Company, anchored his vessel called the Half Moon, 80 tons, inside of Sandy Hook. He afterwards discovered the great river named in his honor. He explored New York Bay and the river which bears his name. It was on these explorations that the Dutch based their claim to the New Netherlands, a tract of land lying between the Connecticut and Delaware rivers. On the lower end of Manhattan Island they established a fur trading post, which they named New Amsterdam. They also erected a small fort on the lower end of the island, where the "Battery" is now located in New York City. The migrations of the Dutch were principally on each side of the Hudson river as far north as what is now Albany. Some settled on the western end of Long Island; opposite New Amsterdam. There were no settlements on the west side of the Hudson river opposite new Amsterdam, except a small trading post at Bergen Point; at what is now the lower end of Jersey City.

"The immigrants from Holland to the New Netherlands were of various lineage, for that country had long been the gathering place of the unfortunate. Refugees from persecution flocked to her boundaries from England and Continental Europe. She housed from the heart of Bohemia those who were swayed by the voice of Huss, the separatists from England, the Huguenots from France, the protestants from the Reformation, the wallcons from Belgium, all came to her hospitable shores, and from there emigrated to the New Eldorado in the Western Continent.

The English had never relinquished their claim to the territory occupied by the Dutch, for as early as 1635, Charles I, of England, issued letters patent, in Latin, granting to Messrs Plowden, Woorsley and seven associates, title to Plowden's Island, or Long Island, together with part of the Continent or firm land near adjacent by points rehearsed, and all islands within ten leagues, called Pamoke, Hudson, or Hudson river isle, *** to hold as of the Imperial Crown of Ireland in Chief, independent of any other but the King immediately. This grant would cover, in addition to Long Island, the island of Manhattan, and also Staten Island. The original draft is in the Bodlean Library, in England, and a copy in Dublin, Ireland. In all my research, I have not found the slightest reference to this grant, on the part of any historian.

It was in 1664, that Charles II, of England, determined to remove from the heart of his American colonies, the Dutch supremacy. Charles had no right to this territory, but it was a case of might makes right. He sent Colonel Richard Nicholls with a fleet of four ships to demand the surrender of New Amsterdam, governed by the genial tyrant, "Peg Leg" Peter Stuyvesant, who in response, was about to give the command to a soldier who stood near the cannon with a lighted torch, to fire, when Stuyvesant was presented with a petition from nearly all the men in the village, not to fire on the enemy, as the entire population of men, women and children, would be killed when the town was captured. Stuyvesant capitulated to Colonel Nicholls, declaring that he would sooner be hanged than endanger the lives of women and children. New Amsterdam became New York, in honor of James, Duke of York, the brother of Charles II, who conferred upon his brother, a charter to all of the lands within the bounds of the New Netherlands. The Province was renamed New York, and Fort Orange took the name of Albany, the Duke's second title.

With the withdrawal of the Swedes from the Delaware river territory, the Atlantic sea coast from Nova Scotia to Florida was placed in the possession of the English. The country had become a geographical unit. The Dutch Colonists, including Peter Stuyvesant, were apparently satisfied, as few embarked for Holland.

The Duke of York, under the charter granted him, had, even before the capture of New Amsterdam, conveyed that part of the New Netherlands lying between the Hudson and Delaware rivers, to Lord John Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. The new grant was named New Jersey, from the Isle of Jersey, in the English Channel, near France, where was the home of Sir George Carteret. His cousin, Captain Philip Carteret, was commissioned Governor of New Jersey, but did not assume the duties of the office in America, until 1665. The grantees assigned their interests to twenty-four Englishmen, none of whom was known to have come to America.

Before the Duke of York apprized Colonel Richard Nicholls, whom he had appointed Governor of New York, that he had made a subordinate grant to Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret, of the territory extending from the Hudson to the Delaware river, Nicholls, following out with eager loyalty his purpose of making the colonies of the Duke, his master, as prosperous and profitable as possible, had, without any jurisdiction or authority over New Jersey, granted licenses to various persons to make purchases of land from the native Indians of that locality. Unfortunately, the early settlers who purchased from the Indians under the licenses of Nicholls, especially those who settled in Middletown and Shrewsbury, in Monmouth County, were involved in difficulties with the Lords Proprietors of New Jersey and those devising under them, and hence arose a bitter, vindictive and yet undetermined series of law proceedings relative to the land titles in that part of the State, not unaccompanied with riots and bloodshed. As a result of final agreements, Berkeley and Carteret declared in 1672, "that the land (though ceded in full by the Crown to the Proprietors) is to be pur-

chased by the Governor and Council from the Indians," and it is the proud boast of the State of New Jersey that every foot of land in it has, in the spirit of the Declarations, been purchased from the native owners. An Indian orator, addressing the New Jersey Legislature, said, "Not a drop of our blood have you spilled in battle. Not an acre of our land have you taken but, with our consent."

Governor Philip Carteret of New Jersey, being unaware of the action of Governor Nicholls of New York, regarding the granting of licenses for purchase of land in New Jersey, shortly after assuming his office in America, dispatched agents to New England to invite immigration, promising most liberal laws as to religion, personal liberty and easy terms of land purchase. An historian records that the influx from New England was because of the salubrity of the climate and fertility of soil. Another thought it worthy of the name of Paradise, because, in addition to natural advantages, it had no lawyers, no physicians, and no parsons.

Among the very first movements of New Englanders to New Jersey, was that sponsored by Daniel Pierce, of Newbury, Massachusetts Bay Colony, who, with nine Associates purchased in 1666, a tract of land located on the estuary that separates Staten Island from the Main, and between the Raritan and Rahway rivers, the tract being six or eight miles long and about as wide. Associated with Daniel Pierce and his nine partners were fifty seven residents of Massachusetts Bay Colony, nearly all being of Newbury, Essex County. Their new purchase was designated as Woodbridge and they took possession during the year 1667, it being the second settlement in New Jersey. However, its charter was not confirmed by the Lords Proprietors until December 1672.

Historians assert that the township was named in honor of the reverend John Woodbridge, of Newbury, Massachusetts Bay Colony. In all of my research, I have never found any justification whatever for such assertions. The reverend John Woodbridge was the nephew of that Newbury, Massachusetts Bay Colony parson, Rev. Thomas Parker, who, for two or three decades kept his parishioners in an almost constant state of turmoil, largely owing to his attempts to have personal control of Church affairs. This nephew came early to Newbury, and was its first Town Clerk, and later its Town Registrar.

After a stay of about a dozen years in Newbury, he returned to England, where he remained for sixteen years, again coming to Massachusetts in 1663, only three years previous to the organization of the New Jersey colony. Being employed by the town as an assistant pastor to his uncle, he was voted an allowance of sixty pounds per annum. Subsequently when a "vote by papers" was taken regarding the continuance of his compensation, thirty five votes were cast, of which four were for continuance, and thirty one were blank. One reason for this may have been that he upheld his uncle in his ecclesiastical rulings. If the Newbury members of the New Jersey Colony were leaving their home town to go to a place where they could establish themselves with greater liberality of religious observance, it would not seem

likely that they would name their New Jersey settlement in honor of a man who had been with the most of them for the short period of three years, and who had probably been hostile to their religious views and actions. However, my doubts as to Woodbridge being named in honor of Rev. John Woodbridge of Newbury, Massachusetts Bay Colony, who never was in Woodbridge, New Jersey, have been most completely confirmed by finding in volume four, pages 449 and 587, of Monnette's wonderful "Piscataway and Woodbridge", a description of the Thomas Bloomfield family that came to Woodbridge, New Jersey, with the pioneer settlers in 1667, from which discription I quote:

"Upon the restoration of Charles II, emigrated from Woodbridge, Suffolk, England. He first took up lands where ye town of Newbury now stands in Massachusetts, and on ye 21st May, 1666, with his associates, purchased of ye Proprietors of East Jersey, ye township of Woodbridge, so named for their home in England."

The underscoring is mine, and the declaration is sufficient evidence to satisfy me as to why the township of Woodbridge was so named. The town of Woodbridge, Suffolk County, England, is located about 80 miles Northeast of London, and seven or eight miles beyond Ipswich, the latter place being the largest in the County. Woodbridge, at the present time having a population of about 5,000. Both places were only a few miles from the North Sea, and both on navigable streams at the time of the settlement of New England.

Peace generally continued in the domains of Carteret and Nicholls until 1673, when the Dutch, by a surprise movement, again took possession of New York and New Jersey. In the latter State every inhabitant was obliged to declare allegiance to the Dutch. There was apparently no organized resistance to this mandate in New Jersey, its citizens probably being glad to be freed from the increasing domineering sway of Certeret. The Dutch supremacy was short lived, as in 1674, the English again controlled the country, which control continued until the time of the Revolutionary War.

Another interesting feature of the early settlement of America, lies in the historical fact that when the members of the proposed Plymouth Colony left Holland, after having made that country their refuge from England's persecution for ten years, their objective was the mouth of the Hudson or Delaware river. At this time many wealthy Hollanders were planning to found trading posts in the New Netherlands, in order to command the fur trade with the Indians. To prevent the Plymouth colonists from getting there first, they bribed the skipper of the ship to land the Colonists somewhere else, which he did. After passing the southern end of the Cape Cod Section, the ship reached the rough waters of Pollock's Shoals, when the skipper declared the ship was in danger, and prevailed on his passengers

to turn back, they not realizing the treachery of the skipper. The ship was taken to Provincetown harbor, and finally across the Massachusetts Bay, to where the permanent settlement of Plymouth was established late in December 1620. Any one visiting Chatham, on the extreme southeastern end of Cape Cod section, can find near the ocean's shore, an immense sign board on which is painted in large letters, the announcement that not far from there at Pollock's Shoals, the ship Mayflower turned back and sought refuge in Provincetown harbor.

The human mind can hardly conceive what the future of America would have been, if the barren, rocky shores of New England had not been known, and the fertile regions first settled by the Dutch, had been the goal reached by Pilgrims and Puritans.

PART THREE

THE STORY OF JOHN BELCONGER THE FIRST AMERICAN ANCESTOR OF ALL THE CONGERS

BY

FRANKLIN BARKER CONGER
WASHINGTON, D. C.
1933

In preparing part three of my story of John Belconger, the first American Conger, it seems advisable to repeat some of the genealogical features of part one and two, in order to enlighten those who may not have perused them.

In the Vital Statistics of Olde Newbury, Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Belconger is recorded as having married Mary Kelly on January 12th, 1666. Another authority gives the date as April 12th of the same year. "Coffin" the well known historian of Olde Newbury, quotes the name as Mary or Sarah. This double named Kelly maiden was born in Olde Newbury, January 12th, 1641, the only daughter of John Kelly, one of the founders of Olde Newbury in 1635. On December 7th, 1666, a daughter, Mary, was born to this couple.

The next year, 1667, John Belconger, his wife Mary or Sarah, and their infant child, Mary, moved to the newly organized Province of New Jersey, where John Belconger participated in the founding of the Township of Woodbridge, situated on the estuary that separates Staten Island from the Main. Woodbridge and the adjoining township on the west, Piscataway, were the second and third settlements in the Province of New Jersey, founded by English speaking people.

Some time after arriving in Woodbridge, John Belconger dropped the prefix from his name, and ever after was known as John Conger.

In 1873, over two hundred years after the founding of Woodbridge the Reverend Joseph W. Dally of Newark, New Jersey, published a history of Woodbridge, based on what was left or was legible, of the records of that place. In it are found several pages of births, marriages and deaths of Woodbridge people.

On page 321, under the caption of John and Mary (Conger) is found the births of children as follows: Sarah; January --- 1668, Joanah, August --- 1670. John, May 24, 1674, Elizabeth, January 1, 1678. Lediah, January 1, 1679. Jonathan, March 29, 1683.

The birth of Elizabeth and Lediah on January 1st, only one year apart, indicates an error, these children probably being twins.

On page 322, under the caption of John and Sarah (Conger). Enos died, November, 29, 1689. Lydia, born April 28, 1698. The naming of Lydia indicates that Lediah, born January 1, 1678-9, died in infancy.

On page 323, Joseph, born May 17, 1692. Job, June 9, 1694. Rachel, May 12, 1696.

Attention is called to the entry of Lydia, 1698, the youngest of the children, which is entered on the page before the entry of the birth of Joseph, born six years before she was.

Three other children than those mentioned in "Dally", were born to John Conger, and his wife Mary or Sarah.

GERSHOM, date or place of birth not found. He and Enos must have been born between the birth dates of Jonathan, 1683, and Joseph, 1692. The record shows that Gershom married Ann, daughter of Doctor Peter DeSigney and his wife Ann. Date of marriage not known but probably around 1705-6, as of the three children born to them, David the eldest is recorded as being born April 15, 1707. Phoebe, September 22, 1708. Gershom, Jr., April 5th, 1711. This Gershom Jr., has been made the subject of very serious controversies by some persons who claim to have been genealogists, as will be fully shown in later pages.

ABIGAIL, apparently unknown to all Conger researchers, until discovered by me in Volume four of "Monnette's Piscataway and Woodbridge, 1932", where the date of her birth in Woodbridge is given as 1690.

BENJAMIN, is mentioned in the will of John Conger, primus, as not being of age when the will was executed. He must have been born after Lydia, probably around 1700.

Mr. Charles L. Conger, formerly of Crookston, now of Minneapolis, Minnesota, a direct descendent of Job, 1694, after over twenty-five years of indefatigable research, has produced a most remarkable record of all known Congers on the American Continent (Except the descendents of Job Conger, 2d, fully shown in the work of 165 pages of my double cousin Charles Greenwood Barker Conger, published in 1903 by Shea Smith of Chicago, Illinois, a Conger descendent). Mr. Charles L. Conger's work is composed of eight large loose leaf volumes. Three sets were distributed as follows: One to the New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey, one to the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minn., and one to the Library of Congress, where it was honored by being placed in the "Rare Book Section", and commendatory acknowledgement made by Mr. Herbert Putnam, Librarian, also by a personal letter from the Chief Assistant Librarian, a copy of which follows:

"Library of Congress, Washington, June 30, 1932. Dear Sir: I am directed by the Librarian to thank you for the eight loose leaf binders of historical material relating to the Conger Family in America, which Mr. Frank B. Conger, brought to the Library recently, as a gift from you. Your letter of June 19 formally presenting the volumes has now been received. The volumes have been placed in the Rare Book Room, in order that Mr. Frank B. Conger may add to the work from time to time as you send new material. As soon as

this work and the indexes to the volumes are completed, we understand that he will notify us, so that the volumes may be bound. The genealogy is a welcome addition to our collection, and your courtesy in presenting it is much appreciated. A formal acknowledgement for the gift has been sent you under separate cover. (Signed) Fred'k W. Ashley, Chief Assistant Librarian. To Mr. Charles L. Conger, Crookston, Minnesota."

Believing that Mr. Charles L. Conger would be interested in the announcement as to Abigail Conger, 1690, found in "Monnette", I advised him accordingly, and received a reply as follows:

"You state that "Monnette" mentions a daughter Abigail, born 1690. Does he give day and month? I am quite sure that this Abigail solves a problem that has been puzzling me for 25 years, as there are indications that she married a man named Brown, and that she was the Abigail Brown who witnessed the will of her brother-in-law, Thomas Cawood, her sister's husband, either Rachael 1696, or Lydia, 1698; and that Abigail Brown had a son Thomas, who in 1767 was named in the will of John Conger, of Hanover, Morris County, New Jersey, as executor, and was designated by John Conger as his trusty friend and brother. If this reasoning is true, Thomas Brown and John Conger were cousins. I am including all this in my new abstract."

About twenty years ago, Mr. Charles L. Conger employed a couple of genealogists, both of Newark, New Jersey, copies of whose reports are found among the papers he donated to the Library of Congress. One of these men criticizes a contemporary as being unreliable, owing to his tendency to believe almost anything told him. The other places the word Reverend before his name. He is the one that makes use of the wording of the codicil to the will of John Conger, primus, and the wording of the will of Gershom, born 1711, third son of Gershom, Sr., in the attempt to show that John Conger had two sons to whom he gave the same name, while each was alive. In addition he endeavors to show that John Conger primus, married a second time, to a person whose name has not been found in any record known to me.

The codicil to the will of John Conger, primus, was executed about six months after he made his will, and about three months after the birth of the third son of Gershom Conger, Sr., who was also named Gershom. The codicil contains the following declaration:

"Being very sick and not expecting to live many hours in this life, and my son Gershom being borne since the making of this my last will above written, doe declare that my will and desire is that my three sons Joseph, Job and Benjamin, as they become of age give unto my son Gershom, ten shilling each of them, and seven pounds out of my estate be put out for him when he comes of age."

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In a previous part of my story I commented on this codicil as follows:

"As Gershom, the third son of Gershom, Sr., and Ann, his wife, was born April 5th, 1711, three months before the codicil was executed, John Conger being very sick and not expecting to live many hours, may have had hallucinations and imagined that his grandson was his own son Gershom, or the person to whom the codicil was dictated may have blundered and put the word son instead of grandson in the codicil, and as there was no further change in the will at the time it was filed, he was not aware of the error if there was one."

Very recently, I found that my version was very similar to that suggested over eighty years ago, by my kinsman, Mr. Samuel Hayes Conger, the well known historian of Newark, New Jersey, who was for over twenty years Librarian of the New Jersey Historical Society of Newark, New Jersey. He commented as follows:

"I think that the word son before Gershom is in error for grandson, either on the part of the abstractor or of the Clerk who originally entered the will in the State records."

Also, very recently, I found in a report of the first genealogist employed by Mr. Charles L. Conger, the identical words used by Samuel Hayes Conger, many years previously, without the slightest indication that he was quoting.

The Reverend Thomas Franklin Waters, in the Massachusetts Quarterly Magazine, expressed an opinion similar to that of Samuel Hayes Conger.

As John Conger, primus, in the codicil to his will directed his three sons, Joseph, Job and Benjamin, to ~~tako~~ take care of Gershom, when they became of age, he must have been possessed of his mental faculties, for not one of the sons was of age at the time the codicil was executed, and this fortifies the theory that the naming of Gershom as a son instead of a grandson was actually an error.

One reason for my contention that the Gershom referred to in the codicil was a grandson, lies in the fact that the wife of John Conger, primus, Mary or Sarah Kelly was born in 1641, and if John Conger, primus, was approximately of her age he would be sixty years old at the time of the birth of Benjamin, the fifteenth child, about 1700. For a man to have a sixteenth child after a lapse of eleven years, when he would be over seventy years old, borders on the improbable. Gershom, Jr., born 1711, son of Gershom Conger, Sr., executed a will in 1735, in which he names Gershom Cawood as a cousin, devising certain property to him. He names as his executors, his "brother", Thomas Cawood and Robert Mitchell. The Reverend genealogist, on the basis of this will of 1735, contends that this Gershom was a son of John Conger, primus, according to his interpretation of the codicil. He also

makes the two administrators of the 1735 will brothers of the maker, by reason of their marrying the two youngest daughters of John Conger, primus, Rachael, 1696 and Lydia, 1698, notwithstanding that there is not any evidence anywhere that either of them ever married. In fact years later, Lydia Conger witnessed a legal document in Cape May County, New Jersey, and there is no evidence known to me that any other Lydia Conger had been born up to that time. But even if Thomas Cawood had married one of those daughters of John Conger, primus, and they had a son named Gershom Cawood, this son would not be a cousin, but a nephew of the man who executed the will of 1735, if the claims of the Reverend genealogist as to the wording of the codicil to the will of John Conger, primus were correct. Conceding that Gershom, 1711, who executed the will of 1735, actually meant cousin as expressed in his will, no other conclusion can be arrived at than that he was the son of Gershom Conger, Sr., especially as the third son of Gershom, Sr., is never after definitely mentioned by this genealogist.

This Reverend genealogist also endeavors to show that John Conger, primus, married a second time, all of which is shown in great detail in the following extract from his report:

"THE SECOND WIFE OF JOHN CONGER OF WOODBRIDGE"

"The surname of the second wife of John Conger of Woodbridge who died in 1711-12 was most probably Cawood. My reasons are as follows:

2011658

Thomas Adams of Woodbridge mentions in his will, dated October 2, 1694, and proved August 17, 1695, a plantation of his now occupied by Thomas Cawood, and the inventory of his estate was made July 26, 1695, which includes a debt due by Thomas Cawood of 360 pds, made by Daniel Stillwell and John Conger, N. J. Archives, 23-5. The debt was the amount of a mortgage given May 8, 1695, by Thomas Cawood on 100 acres of land on Rahwack Neck which Thomas Adams the same day deeded to Cawood. Two years previously December 29, 1693, Thomas Adams had deeded to Cawood, whom he calls in the deed his "Son-in-law" (i-e-his stepson) another tract of land, part of which Thomas Cawood sold May 3, 1695, the same day he executed the mortgage to his stepfather, to John Fitzrandolph and another part of which "he and his wife Ruth," February 23, 1696-7, deeded to Joshua Musherune.

These facts show two things, namely:

(1) That Thomas Adams married the widow Rebecca Cawood, who had by her first husband at least one son, Thomas, who married between May 8, 1695 and February 23, 1696-7, Ruth ----. It is highly probable that the widow Rebecca Cawood was also the mother of a daughter Sarah Cawood, who became the wife of John Conger of Woodbridge. John Conger, in the codicil of his will, mentions a son Gershom born after the writing of the will. He already had a

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son Gershom by his first wife, who had a son Gershom likewise born after the execution of John Conger's will, but there are reasons independent of this argument for believing that John Conger referred to a son instead of a grandson in the codicil, and this point of view is consequently adopted here. This son Gershom, Jr., so called to distinguish him from his older brother of the same name, wrote his will November 29, 1735, and in it names his brother Thomas Cawood and his brother Robert Mitchell, and his cousin Gershom Cawood. Now Gershom Conger, Jr., had two sisters, Rachael and Lydia, and if one of them had married Thomas Cawood and the other Robert Mitchell, the term brother in Gershom's will is perfectly natural as it was at that time commonly used to refer to a brother-in-law, this latter term frequently meaning in the language of the time a "Stepbrother". Moreover if Thomas Cawood and the sister of Gershom, Jr., had a son Gershom Cawood born before November 29, 1735, he would quite as naturally be called cousin, i-e-nephew, in his uncle Gershom's will. It is no argument against this that Gershom Cawood is not mentioned in the will of his father Thomas Cawood, dated August 23, 1747, i-e-twelve years after. He probably died long before this last date. This Thomas Cawood could not have been the same Thomas Cawood who married Ruth ----, as his children were all born about 1720 to 1740, the youngest, Benjamin, being a minor in 1747. As however, he names his eldest son Thomas, and his eldest daughter, Ruth, it is more than likely that he was the son of Thomas and Ruth Cawood, inasmuch as the common practice of the time was to name the eldest children primarily after their grandparents, in this case Thomas, named after his paternal grandfather, Sarah, after her maternal grandmother, Ruth after her maternal grandmother. Another reason for adopting the view that Gershom Jr., that died in 1735, naming his "two brothers" in his will, is Gershom of John, rather than Gershom, son of Gershom, is that the former had two sisters of record to be wives of the "two brothers", and the latter has only one sister of record and therefore we must make an extra assumption if we choose Gershom, son of Gershom."

"If this reasoning holds good, then Sarah, the mother of the wife of Thomas, son of Thomas and Sarah Cawood, was his aunt, and sister of his father, and consequently the second wife of John Conger, whose daughter, Thomas Cawood Jr., married, was Sarah Cawood, who married second Thomas Adams of Woodbridge, by her first husband."

"For the sake of clearness and to emphasize the use of the terms "brother", "brother-in-law" as used in those days, I have added to the diagram the solution of the terms as used in the letters of administration of the estate of John Spencer, of Parth Amboy, who died in 1743. Whether the Gershom referred to in this case is Gershom, Sr., son of John and Mary, or his son Gershom, son of Gershom and Ann, I am not prepared to say."

The Reverend genealogist does not confirm his claim that John Conger, primus, married a Sarah Cawood but merely surmises, as follows:

"It is highly probable that the widow Rebecca Cawood was also the mother of a daughter Sarah Cawood who became the wife of John Conger of Woodbridge."

There is no proof whatever that John Conger, primus, ever married a second time, either a Sarah Cawood or any one else.

There is every reason for not taking the Reverend genealogist seriously because although he claims to be a strict adherent to fact-finding, in this instance at least, he deals entirely in surmises instead of facts, as shown in the foregoing quotations.

In renewing my assertion that the Reverend genealogist had absolutely no justifiable foundation for his claim that John Conger primus, had two living children of the same name, and that he had a second wife named Cawood, I assert that there was only one Gershom Conger, Jr., and he was born April 5, 1711, the third son of Gershom Conger, Sr., husband of Ann (DeSigney) Conger, and he is the Gershom who executed a will in 1735, and died shortly after. Also that there is not the slightest proof that the widow Cawood, second wife of Thomas Adams, ever had a daughter Sarah, who it is claimed married John Conger, primus, as his second wife. Also that there is no proof that Mary or Sarah (Kelly) Conger died in 1685 or thereabouts. But there is sufficient proof that Mary or Sarah (Kelly) Conger was alive after the birth of Benjamin, last child of John Conger, primus, probably about 1700.

Even if it is only a theory, I advance the following: The record shows that in 1702, John Conger, primus, deeded to his three motherless grandchildren eighty acres of land as a token of "love and affection." He names the children as John, Allen and Edward, sons of Edward Wilkison of Woodbridge. John was born February 15, 1685, Allen June 12, 1687. Date of birth of third child not known to me. If Mary, born December 21, 1666, the first child and first daughter of John Conger, primus, and his wife Mary or Sarah (Kelly) Conger, was the mother of these three children, she would have been in 1785, when the first child was born, about nineteen years old, and probably about eighteen years old when she married. If Sarah, born 1668, the second child and second daughter was the mother, she would have probably been about sixteen years old when she married. Thus the preponderance seems to be in favor of Mary being the mother.

The records of Trinity Church, Woodbridge, New Jersey, Reverend Nathaniel Wade, Pastor, show that on December 26, 1708, Sarah Conger joined the Church. That on May 12, 1709, John Conger, Edward Wilkison and Mary Conger, joined the Church. If Mary Conger died prior to 1702, it would prove that Sarah Conger who joined the Church December 26, 1708, was the second child/and second daughter of John and Mary or Sarah (Kelly) Conger, as there was at that time no other unmarried Sarah Conger known in Woodbridge. Also, as there was no unmarried Mary Conger living in Woodbridge on May 12th, 1709, it is conclusive evidence that this Mary Conger was none other than Mary or Sarah (Kelly) Conger, who married John Belconger in Olde Newbury in 1666.

I have examined the abstracts of all the Conger wills on file in New Jersey, together with wills of many collateral relatives, and am positive that in no case does the word "brother" as used in connection with the Conger family by the Reverend genealogist to bolster up his contentions, mean anything more than a friendly appellation and in no instance in the sense of actual relationship. He lays great stress on the two daughters of John Conger, primus, marrying Thomas Cawood and Robert Mitchell in order to be in harmony with his declaration that two brothers were mentioned in the will of Gershom Conger, Jr., executed in 1735. In an abstract of the will of this Gershom Conger, Jr., found in a New Jersey publication it definitely reads: "Brother Thomas Cawood and Robert Mitchell", so that the assumption that it was necessary to find two sisters to marry the two men who were named as executors by Gershom Conger, Jr., in 1735, is apparently unnecessary. But to further spike the guns of the Reverend genealogist I again assert the records of Cape May County, New Jersey, several years later show that Lydia Conger witnessed a will there, and the assertion is made that there is no record of an unmarried Lydia Conger being in existence at that time except the youngest daughter of John Conger, primus. The only way in which Gershom Cawood could be justifiably called cousin by Gershom Conger, in his will of 1735, would be to acknowledge without question that this Gershom Conger was the third son of Gershom Sr., and Ann (DeSigney) Conger, and that some Cawood married a daughter of John Conger, primus, possibly Abigail, 1690, or Rachel 1696, and this couple had a son Gershom Cawood, who of course would be a natural cousin of the above described Gershom Conger, Jr. There is no way of determining the age of this Gershom Cawood. His cousin Gershom Conger would have been about twenty-four years old at time of executing the will of 1735.

Regarding the perplexity of the Reverend genealogist as to whether there was any other young Gershom Conger than the one he claims was the Gershom named in John Conger's Codicil, because a Gershom Conger was occasionally mentioned in transactions with the Fitzrandolph family of Piscataway, and the Spencer family of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, the Gershom of the Fitzrandolph family transaction was Gershom Conger, Sr., brother of Joana or Hannah Conger, who married Joseph Fitzrandolph, and it was the same Gershom Conger, Sr., who witnessed the will of John Spencer of Perth Amboy, because Gershom Conger, Sr., was living in Perth Amboy when he executed his own will in 1747.

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The Reverend Joseph W. Dally, on Page 178 of his history of Woodbridge, makes an unjustifiable fling at John Conger, primus, in connection with a transaction in which John Conger, primus, was a participant. I quote:

"In January 1694, Nathaniel Fitzrandolph and John Bloomfield were sent to discourse with John Browne of Amboy, or any other person that may be suitable, to secure his services as a teacher. On the 27th of February, it was voted that John Browne of Amboy should have twenty four pounds a year allowed him for keeping a free school in this town this next year. John Conger protested against this vote, on what ground does not appear. He demanded that his protest be recorded, which was done. Doubtless he thought 24 pounds too lavish an expenditure for teaching for one year. His views of a liberal educational policy were well illustrated in the signature he attached to an important township paper a year after, in subscribing his name with cabalistic "λ" his mark.

In the first place the Reverend Dally exceeded the bounds of propriety in printing his surmises as to the reasons for a man expressing his objections to a certain proposition, when he could not have had the slightest knowledge of such reasons. This Reverend person should have taken into consideration that Perth Amboy was the principal village in the one thousand acre tract which was the property of the Twenty-four English Proprietors named by Berkely and Carteret, and no doubt largely peopled by their class of emigrants. It is known that John Conger, primus, was most decidedly hostile to the "Amboy Idea", which would account for his protest to the hiring of an Amboy Idea school teacher. But the Reverend Dally committed a greater offence when he charged John Conger, primus, as being illiterate. I quote from Monnette, Volume Four, Page 596, as follows:

"John Conger, who signed his own name according to one original record, as John Belconger, was a prominent First Settler of Woodbridge, transmitting a numerous progeny."

That John Conger, primus, was considered a prominent citizen of Woodbridge is evidenced by an article on Piscataway Township in a New Jersey publication as follows:

"In the neighboring town of Woodbridge at this early date, were located the New England families of Ayres, Andrews, Baker, Bloomfield, Bishop, Compton, CONGER, Dennis, Illsley, Moore, Parker, Pike, Smith and others."

There was no man in Woodbridge in its early years that transacted as many real estate deals as John Conger, primus. There was no man in Woodbridge in the first thirty years of its existence that was appointed to as many local offices of trust in the Township, or acted as executor of wills and appraiser of estates as often as did John Conger, primus. No man in Woodbridge left as many descendents who have made names famous in war and civil life as did John Conger, primus. No man in Woodbridge was connected by marriage of his descendents with as many prominent families of the State of New Jersey and elsewhere as was John Conger, primus.



--- 10 --- The Story of John Belconger.

I think I have spiked the guns of the only two New Jerseyites who have attempted to besmirch the name of my illustrious ancestor.

It is decidedly apparent that the researchers of the Conger Union and individuals, not excepting my double cousin, Charles Greenwood Barker Conger, with his four years of publication in Collamer's Historical Bulletin, were unable to gather enough data to correctly continue the line of descent from John Conger, primus, as is shown in early publications, which misconceptions would not have occurred had they been in possession of the accurate data now available to historical researchers.

Consequently, a rearrangement is absolutely required in many cases, for instance, a long line of descendents were attributed to John, born in 1674. There is no evidence, to base his having any descendents, as he was never married. He remained a resident of Woodbridge for many years, finally going to a Quaker Settlement in Salem County, New Jersey, where, according to records, he died intestate in 1757. In Woodbridge in 1717 he is recorded as having acted as representative of the heirs of John Conger, primus, in drawing lots for portions of the undistributed common lands of the original settlers. In 1715 he and his brother Joseph, born 1692, served in the King's Militia, under the command of the Governor of the State of New York, that official at that time serving the two states. This makes necessary the allotment of the very numerous progeny assigned to John Conger, Jr., by my double cousin Charles Greenwood Barker Conger to other sons of John Conger, primus, mostly to Jonathan, born 1783, Gershom, Sr., born about 1785 and Joseph 1692. The descendents of Job, 1694, are believed to be correctly assigned, those of Job 2nd, by my double cousin Charles Greenwood Barker Conger his direct descendent, and those of Enoch, brother of Job 2nd, by Mr. Charles L. Conger, of Minnesota, a direct descendent, whose wonderful collection seems to be approximately correct, as are his records of all other Conger descendents in North America.

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The story of John Belconger will be completed with part four, which will be ready for gratuitous distribution in a few weeks to those descendents who were sufficiently interested in parts one and two to acknowledge receipt.

Historical Societies and Genealogical organizations now on my list will be furnished with the full set, and others also upon request.

FRANKLIN BARKER CONGER
1933.

